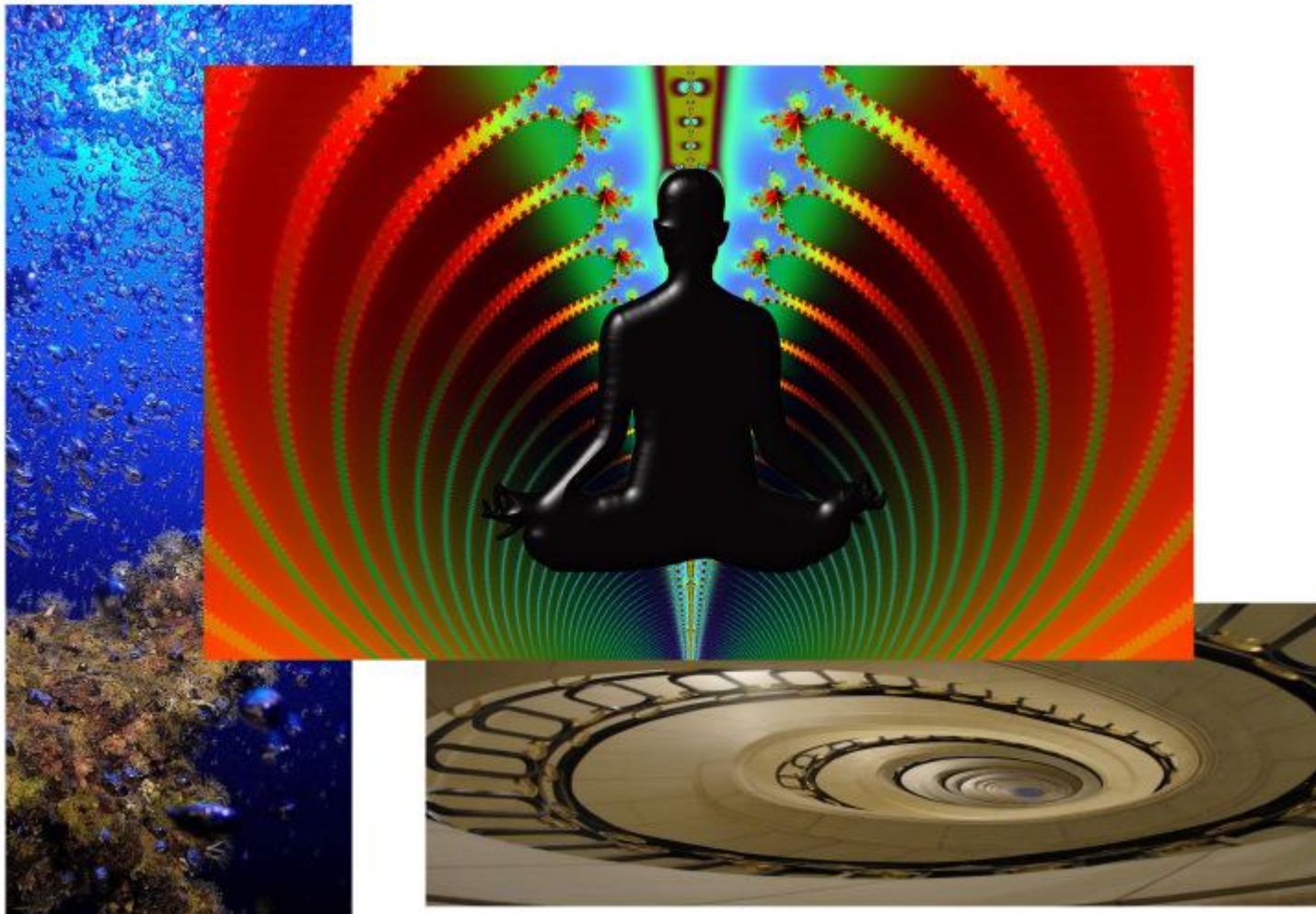


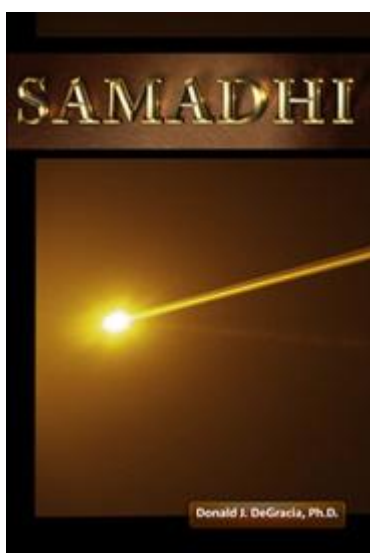
# Patanjali's Ten Types of Samadhi

Standard

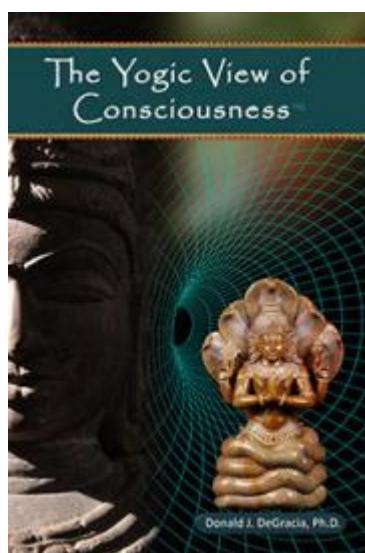


**Summary:** Here I describe the ten types of samadhi listed in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* and how they are related, according to I.K. Taimni's descriptions in his book *The Science of Yoga*.

*Before proceeding, please note: If you find this material of interest, you may be interested in two of my free ebooks.*



A collection of all my articles on yogic



An overview of the methods and

methods and samadhi, including this philosophy of yoga and how it links  
article about the 10 types of samadhi. to modern science and Western  
philosophy.

### Introductory Remarks

In *What is Science?* I did not describe in a systematic way the various types of samadhi. Had I gone into too much detail it would have made that a different essay. A [comment](#) from [Durga Ma](#) has prompted me to write this summary on the ten types of samadhi.

It must be emphasized that all the types of samadhi are altered states of consciousness. They are outside the experience of normal people who do not practice yoga. And even for those who practice real yoga – Raja yoga – the various types of samadhi are quantum levels apart, probably quite literally so, with respect to attainability. Non- practitioners of yoga can get a small glimmer of insight into the types of samadhi by reflecting on the differences between their waking and dream experiences, which are two major forms of consciousness accessible to everybody.

### Ten Types of Samadhi

In the *Yoga Sutras* different adjectives are added to the word “samadhi”, such as “sabija”, “asamprajnata” etc. I.K Taimni, In *The Science of Yoga*, identifies **ten types of samadhi** in the *Yoga Sutras*. All ten types of samadhi share in common the absorption of the yogi in the state of extreme concentration of the mind. What distinguished the ten types is that each occurs at a different level of consciousness. To understand the levels of consciousness, one must be aware of cosmologies that include the nonphysical worlds.

As a theosophist, Taimni was well-aware of the theosophical [septenary scheme](#) of the nonphysical planes. As a scholar and translator of ancient Indian texts, he was aware of other maps of the nonphysical worlds, including the [4-fold scheme](#) used in the *Yoga Sutras* (described in [part 9](#) of *What is Science?*). As we show below, Taimni mapped the different forms of samadhi to both the 7-fold theosophical scheme and the 4-fold classical Vedanta scheme of the nonphysical worlds.

It is taught particularly in theosophy that one interacts with the nonphysical planes via nonphysical “bodies” or “vehicles”. The physical body is an instrument allowing the mind to interact with the physical universe. The nonphysical bodies allow the mind to interact with the nonphysical planes, and have names such as the “astral body”, “mental body”, etc. However, it is immaterial whether we think of the different levels of consciousness as occurring via nonphysical bodies, or just think of them as different global states of consciousness. The effect is the same for all practical purposes.

Some of the methods of Raja Yoga serve to train the mind to operate at the different levels of consciousness. Other methods train the mind to transfer consciousness amongst the various levels. Therefore, four types of samadhi are distinguished by the level of consciousness at which samadhi is performed. Four types of samadhi are transition states between adjacent levels of consciousness. The remaining two types of samadhi are very special states of consciousness.

### Diving into the Depths of Consciousness

After the eight limbs (yama, niyama, asanas, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, and samadhi) are mastered, samadhi is the means used to dive through consciousness. Learning samadhi is not the end of yoga, it is the beginning. This is very important to understand. The ten types of samadhi form a sequence whereby consciousness descends from its superficial into its deeper layers, one after another.

It must be recalled that the goal of yoga is to “join”. To join with what? To join with the infinite. In the *Yoga Sutras* the joining with infinity is called “Kaivalya”, which means “alone” or “isolated”. This is a concept the Western mind calls “[absolute infinite](#)” and occurs in the intellectual context of

Georg Cantor's transfinite mathematics. To the Western mind these are mere intellectual ideas. In yoga, the experience of the infinite is the coveted reality. It is called "[Brahman](#)" in Hinduism, but sometimes [Parabrahman](#), sometimes [Parashiva](#), sometimes [Parameshwara](#). Whatever it is called, it is the experience of everything. That is why Patanjali called it "Kaivalya", "alone". There is nothing beyond, beside, or outside of it. It is all that is, was or ever will be.

The ten types of samadhi are the sequential stages one must pass through in moving from the relative existence of our waking consciousness to the state of infinity, or Kaivalya.

Let me say that again so it is crystal clear: yoga is the protocol, method, steps, by which we can directly experience the infinite. The steps from the relative to the Absolute are the ten types of samadhi.

Let us first name and organize the ten types, then return back to how they cause this sequential passage from the waking world of relative-ness to the state of infinity or Kaivalya.

### **Categorizing Samadhi**

Let us make an outline of the ten types of samadhi:

[1] **Sabija Samadhi** – this is samadhi “with a seed”, where there is an object of meditation in the mind of the yoga. The object of mediation is called a “pratyaya” in Patanjali’s terminology. Within sabija samadhi, there are two subtypes:

A. **Samprajnata samadhi** – This is samadhi where the yogi is absorbed in the pratyaya at a particular level of consciousness. Samprajnata samadhi can occur at each of the four main levels of consciousness. These states of consciousness progress from the surface to the inner most depth of consciousness:

- i. **Savitarka samadhi = Vitarka** – This is consciousness of particulars.
- ii. **Savicara samadhi = Vicara** – This is consciousness of archetypes.
- iii. **Ananda** – This is consciousness of patterns amongst the archetypes, where it is the pattern that is the focus of consciousness more so than the archetypes.
- iv. **Asmita** – This is consciousness of, for lack of a better term, wholeness. There are no divisions in awareness at this level of consciousness. As strange and as absurd as it sounds to the Western mind, this level of consciousness is omniscient with respect to the relative worlds of becoming, but is still nothing, insignificant, with respect to Kaivalya. It is the state of being the big fish in the little pond of relative existence.

B. **Asamprajnata samadhi** – This is a transition state between two levels of consciousness. Asamprajnata samadhi are transition states as follows:

- i. **Nirvitarka = Vitarka to vicara**
- ii. **Nirvichara = Vicara to ananda**
- iii. **Ananda to asmita**
- iv. **Asmita to nirbija samadhi**

[2] **Nirbija Samadhi** – This is samadhi “without a seed”, where there is no pratyaya. It is the most advanced form of samadhi and leads to dharma megha samadhi.

[3] **Dharma megha samadhi** is a unique. It is the transition state out of the worlds of relative becoming and into Kaivalya.

We can make a flow chart that shows the relationships between the various forms of samadhi:

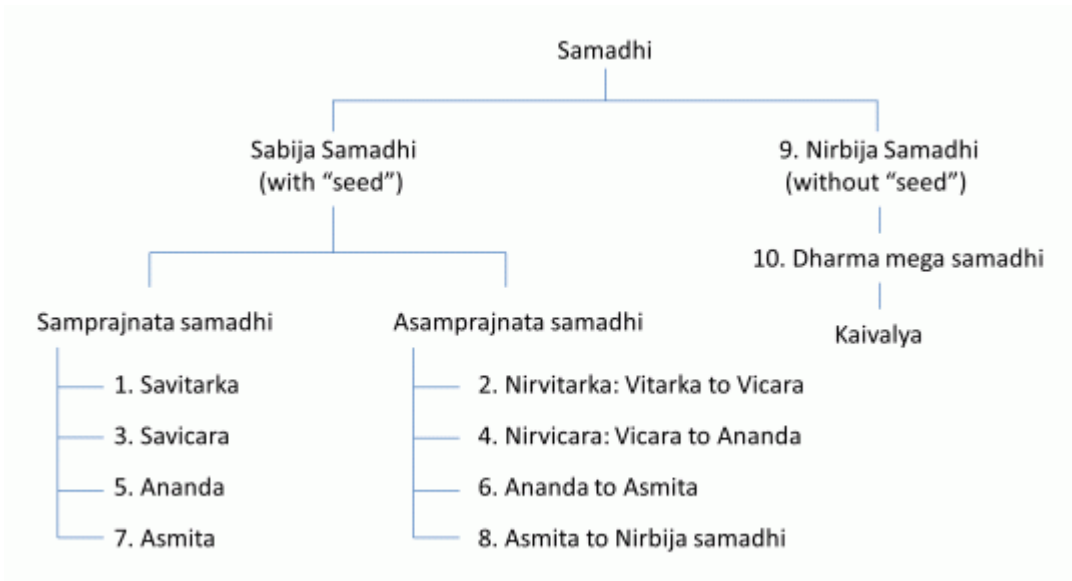


Figure 1: The relationship between the 10 types of samadhi

### States and Transition State

In my [2nd PlaneTalk post](#), I showed this important diagram from Taimni:

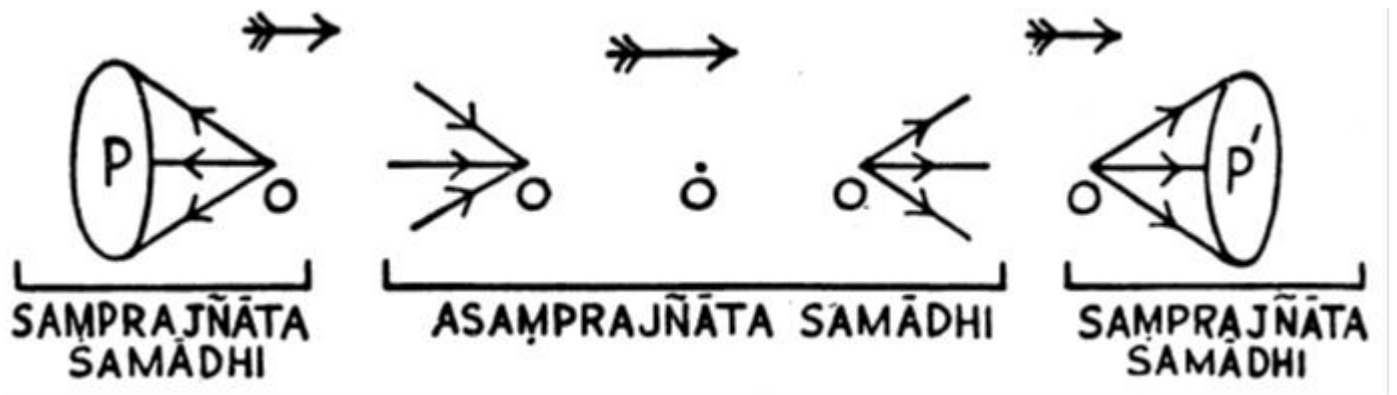


Figure 2: Relationship between samprajnata and asamprajnata samadhi.

We can see that he is showing the transition between two different types of samprajnata samadhi. He is showing the “sinking through consciousness” process that samadhi allows. As I stated before, Taimni shows in this diagram the exact mechanism that allows consciousness to transfer between its different global states. This diagram applies as to the transition from the waking world to the dream state of an ordinary person as much as it applies to a yogi transferring consciousness between any of the four worlds.

It is an extraordinary diagram and one of the most important diagrams you will ever see. So much is explained by this diagram it isn't funny. However, it's not my intent here to dwell on the wide ranging implications, which I have done to some extent in my [2nd blog post](#). Here I show this diagram specifically with respect to the four types of samprajnata and four types of asamprajnata samadhi.

### **The Four Worlds of Things and Stuff**

The above diagram is meant to be viewed with respect to the following diagram, also from *The Science of Yoga*, that shows in a sequential fashion the descent from the surface to the center of consciousness:

VEDANTIC  
CLASSIFICATION

MANOMAYA KOŚA

VIJÑĀNAMAYA KOŚA

ĀNANDAMAYA KOŚA

ĀTMA

THEOSOPHICAL  
CLASSIFICATION

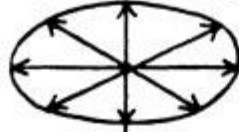
LOWER MENTAL BODY

CAUSAL BODY

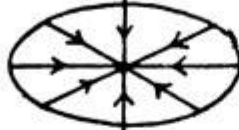
BUDDHIC VEHICLE

ĀTMIC  
VEHICLE

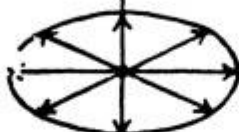
DHĀRAṆĀ  
↓  
DHYĀNA  
↓  
SAMĀDHI



SAMPRAJÑĀTA-VITARKA { SAVITARKA  
NIRVITARKA



ASAMPRAJÑĀTA



SAMPRAJÑĀTA-VICĀRA { SAVICĀRA  
NIRVICĀRA



ASAMPRAJÑĀTA



SAMPRAJÑĀTA-SĀNANDA



ASAMPRAJÑĀTA



SAMPRAJÑĀTA-SASMITĀ



NIRBIJA SAMĀDHI



DHARMA-MEGHA-SAMĀDHI

SABĪJA SAMĀDHI

NIRBIJA SAMĀDHI

# STAGES OF SAMĀDHI

Figure 3: The descent through consciousness via the 10 types of samadhi.

I think this diagram too is stunningly brilliant. It is completely self-explanatory. But I will walk the Reader though it anyway.

Let us begin with the column on the right. As seen at the top, he lists the precursors to samadhi: dharana and dhyana. Learning vitarka samprajnata samadhi (called savitarka samadhi) is an intermediate level of yogic skill. This is the first form of samadhi learnt. By practicing at this level, the yogi will eventually “dissolve” or “break through” the pratyaya at the vitarka level. This releases artha as was discussed extensively in “*What is Science?*”

The dissolution of the pratyaya and accompanying release of artha at the vitarka level will create a momentary state where there is nothing in consciousness (nirvitarka samadhi). This state is something like a vacuum. As depicted by the circles with arrows, the “direction” of consciousness moves from being outwardly directed, called **paranga cetana**, to inwardly directed, called **pratyak cetana**. This is asamprajnata samadhi at the vitarka to vicara boundary or nirvitarka samadhi.

After some practice, the yogi will be able to fully transfer consciousness from the vitarka to the vicara level, where the pratyaya now takes on a different and deeper form. Samadhi now is called savicara samadhi. The yogi now must learn to “break through” the pratyaya at the vicara level. Success leads to pratyak cetana at the vicara level, called nirvicara samadhi, which is the transition state from the vicara to the ananda level.

Analogous processes repeat at the ananda and asmita levels. At each level of consciousness – vitarka, vicara, ananda and asmita – deeper and deeper levels of meaning are discovered in the pratyaya.

In this fashion, one can, in a simple minded way, think of the pratyaya as like a rope that the yogi uses to pull his or herself deeper and deeper into consciousness.

As seen in Figure 3 on the left, Taimni maps the 4-fold yogic cosmology to those of classical Vedanta and also to the 7-fold scheme of Theosophy. It is to be noted that in each case, the lowest stage of samadhi – savitarka samadhi – occurs in the lower mental body. This again reinforces the notion that all forms of samadhi are altered states. Even in dreaming, we use the astral body, and not the mental body. So, the lowest stage of samadhi is an altered state more subtle than the dream body we all experience when we dream during sleep.

It must be noted I am describing the mechanics of these processes. The above descriptions gives no indication whatsoever of the actual contents in the consciousness of the yogi. These are very extreme and unlike anything we experience when awake. Sublime is an understatement of the highest order. But that is all I will say on this aspect since we are discussing only the mechanics.

### **From Relative To Absolute**

At the asmita level, the yogi is now at the deepest possible level of conscious contents, the finest possible level of vrittis. There is nothing left of the pratyaya when asamprajnata samadhi is accomplished at the asmita level. A completely different effect results at this level of consciousness.

The only thing present at this stage is pure, empty consciousness: only self-aware being. This is nirbija samadhi. The yogi must struggle with this completely empty state of self-aware being until it is learned how to achieve the final stage.

In the *Yoga Sutras*, the aphorisms pertaining to nirbija samadhi and dharma megha samadhi are abstract, obscure and almost incomprehensible. Patanjali seems to say that, in the state of nirbija samadhi, one comes to experience the (seeming) emptiness between the moments of time. One learns eventually to perform samadhi on this emptiness between the moments of time. When this is successful, one has mastered dharma mega samadhi.



One literally jumps out of time and into eternity.

I kid you not. Go read the *Yoga Sutras* for yourself. I recommend Taimni's commentary because he was a scientist and put things in terms a scientifically-trained person can understand. But even if you read other, less scientifically-oriented translations, they all translate these aphorisms similarly (see [here](#)). The issue becomes: how are they interpreted? Surprisingly, there is often complementarity to the different interpretations, even if they seem superficially different.

Just for the heck of it, let's show the aphorism pertaining to dharma megha samadhi and Kaivalya. They are a trip. Even if you don't believe one iota of this stuff, these ideas make modern science fiction look totally lame.

### **Spoiler Alert: This is the End of the *Yoga Sutras***

Aphorism 4.29 defines dharma mega samadhi:

२९. प्रसंख्यानोऽप्यकुसीदस्य सर्वथा विवेकख्यातेर्धर्म-  
मेघः समाधिः ।

Prasaṅkhyāne 'py akusīdasya sarvathā  
viveka-khyater dharma-meghaḥ  
samādhīḥ.

प्रसंख्यानं in the knowledge of the highest meditation अपि even  
अकुसीदस्य of one who has no interest left सर्वथा in every way; by all  
means विवेकख्यातेः discrimination leading to awareness of Reality  
धर्ममेघः showering the *Dharmas*; relating to properties समाधिः trance.

Taimni's translation:

“29. In the case of one, who is able to maintain a constant state of Vairagya even towards the most exalted state of enlightenment and to exercise the highest kind of discrimination, follows Dharma-Megha-Samadhi.”

This is basically saying that the yogi is able to achieve nirbija samadhi at the asmita level and does not get trapped in the temptation of being omnipotent and omniscient in the worlds of relative becoming. The big fish rejects the little pond.

After this stage, the yogi encounters the basic unit of change in Nature:

Aphorism 4.33:

३३. क्षणप्रतियोगी परिणामापरान्तनिर्ग्राह्यः क्रमः ।

Kṣaṇa-pratīyogī pariṇāmāparānta-  
nirgrāhyaḥ kramah.

क्षण moments प्रतियोगी corresponding परिणाम change अपरान्त  
(at) the final end निर्ग्राह्यः entirely apprehensible क्रम process;  
succession.

Taimni's translation:

“33. The process, corresponding to moments which become apprehensible at the final end of transformation (of the Gunas), is Kramah.”

Aphorism 4.33 should be of particular interest to those with an interest in physics, neuroscience, the philosophy of mind, or Kant's transcendental idealism. It is interesting this was written at least as early as 250 AD, if not much earlier; no one knows for certain when the Yoga Sutras were created. Here Patanjali describes the quantum nature of time, and describes how to utilize this fact to escape from relative-ness.

At this point, everything gets so weird that it is worth repeating a good chunk of Taimni's commentary on aphorism 4.33:

“According to Yogic philosophy the seemingly continuous phenomena which we cognize through the instrumentality of the mind are not really continuous and like the cinematographic picture on the screen consist of a series, of discontinuous states. Each successive change in the phenomenal world which is separate and distinct produces a corresponding impression upon the mind but these impressions succeed one another with such rapidity that we get the impression of continuity. The interval of time corresponding to each of these successive states is called a Ksana. So Ksana may be called the smallest unit of time which cannot be broken up further.”

“The next word to be considered is Kramah. We have seen just now that the impression of continuous phenomena in our mind is produced by a succession of discontinuous changes in Prakriti around us. Kramah stands for this process consisting of a relentless succession of discontinuous changes underlying all kinds of phenomena. This process is ultimately based upon the unit of time, Ksana, as the projection of the cinematographic picture is based upon each opening and closing of aperture. As Ksana succeeds Ksana the whole manifested world passes from one distinct state to another distinct state, but the succession is so rapid that we are not conscious of the discontinuity.”

“It will be seen, therefore, that according to the Yogic philosophy not only is the whole basis of manifestation material—using the word material in its widest sense— but also that the changes which take place in Prakriti and which produce all kinds of phenomena are essentially mechanical, that is, based on a hidden, essentially mechanical process. The whole manifested Universe and everything in it changes from moment to moment by a relentless law which is inherent, in the very nature of manifestation. If we have grasped the nature of the process indicated by the two words Ksana and Kramah it should not be difficult to understand the meaning of the Sutra under discussion. It means simply that the Yogi can become aware of the Ultimate Reality only when his consciousness is liberated from the limitations of this process which produces Time, by performing Samyama on this process as indicated in III-53. As long as his consciousness is involved in the process he cannot know his Real nature. It is only when he steps out of the world of the unreal into the Light of Reality that he realizes not only the true nature of Reality but also of the Relative world of Time and Space which he has left behind.”

Literally stepping out of time and into eternity. WTF???

Anyway, the above is why nirbija samadhi and dharma mega samadhi are special.

Just to close this all out, here is the last aphorism of the Yoga Sutras where we see the world “kaivalyam” used, as well as the term “svarupa”, the real essence of...

Aphorism 4.34 (the final aphorism of the book):

३४. पुरुषार्थशून्यानां गुणानां प्रतिप्रसवः कैवल्यं स्वरूप-  
प्रतिष्ठा वा चितिशक्तेरिति ।

Purusārtha-śūnyānāṃ guṇānāṃ prati-  
prasavaḥ kaivalyaṃ svarūpa-pratiṣṭhā  
vā citi-śakter iti.

पुरुषार्थ aim of the *Puruṣa* शून्यानां devoid of गुणानां of the *Guṇas*  
or the three fundamental qualities प्रतिप्रसवः re-absorption; reces-  
sion; re-mergence कैवल्यं Liberation स्वरूप (in) Real or own nature  
प्रतिष्ठा establishment वा or चितिशक्तेः of the power of pure Con-  
sciousness इति Finis.

“34. Kaivalya is the state (of Enlightenment) following reemergence of the Gunas because of their becoming devoid of the object of the Purusa. In this state the Purusa is established in his Real nature which is pure Consciousness. Finis.”

### Wrap Up

So, it got a little kooky at the end there. It can't be helped. I didn't write the *Yoga Sutras*. I'm just reporting on what they say.

Hopefully the above at least explicates the ten types of samadhi, and shows the sequential progression from the surface to the inner most depths of consciousness via samprajnata and asamprajnata samadhi leading to the empty state of nirbija samadhi, and finally to Kaivalya via dharma mega samadhi.

Like the Grateful Dead said: “[What a long strange trip its been](#)”.

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## 32 thoughts on “Patanjali’s Ten Types of Samadhi”

1.  *nevi*

You saw the problem with Taimni’s translation and interpretation here yourself: “Taimni mapped the different forms of samadhi to ... the 7-fold theosophical scheme”.

- [September 16, 2014 at 9:58 am](#)
- [Reply](#)
- [dondeg](#)

Hi. Thanks for the comment. I’m not sure of your point though. If you would be so kind, could you please explain why this is a problem? Thanks. -Don

- [September 16, 2014 at 3:13 pm](#)
- [Reply](#)

2.  *nevi*

Taimni says (page 34) that the seed of the Pratyaya is dropped, and that, when it is dropped (page 34-35) “the consciousness begins to recede automatically to its centre” – but then he goes on to say that consciousness will pass “momentarily” through something (it’s not specified) and then emerge into the next “vehicle”, and after that the consciousness will be taken up with the Pratyaya of the next “higher plane” ... but what is in consciousness whilst the Pratyaya is dropped? If it’s nothing, then the meditator has achieved the final goal of pure consciousness or Kavalya. But Taimni doesn’t appear to see it like that at all – he describes how the meditator must go through many further stages before reaching Kaivalya, or pure consciousness.

Taimni explains this away by saying, “The student should also note that throughout the recession of consciousness in the four stages there is always something in the field of consciousness. It is true that during the period of Asamprajnata Samadhi there is no Pratyaya but only a ‘cloud’ or void but a ‘cloud’ or void is also a cover on pure consciousness.” This seems unsatisfactory and incomprehensible. What is this “cloud”? Where is it mentioned in Patanjali’s aphorisms?

In general Taimni seems very concerned to talk about “levels” or “planes” of experience, with an aim to tie Yoga into rather archaic “occult” Theosophical ideas, which muddies the whole interpretation. One might wish for a Taimni who never read any “theosophy”.

- [September 17, 2014 at 4:15 pm](#)
- [Reply](#)
- [dondeg](#)

Dear Nevi. Thank you for clarifying your point. It is a good point you raise and an important point. He addresses this issue somewhere but I cannot recall if it is in Science of Yoga or Man, God and The Universe. I will try best I can to recall what he said. It was something to the effect that every time the transition between planes occurs, one

must pass through the center of consciousness (point 'o' in the diagram). The implication of this is exactly what you said, that, in principle, one has direct access to the final goal of pure consciousness. However, the actual facts are a function of one's purity. If one is inexperienced and still bound to desires and thought-forms, one cannot access the center effectively, they cannot pass directly to Kaivalya. They cannot reach the required frequency (so to speak) to get to the very center, they can only go as far as they are purified to go. For most people, that means only the next plane over – vicara or the astral plane. If there are still samskaras binding the person, this will be like a weight and hold the person to lower levels.

It is something like this. I think it was in *Man, God and The Universe* because he spends a lot of time in that book discussing the center of consciousness as a point, and all its properties. I think if you can find this material, you will see that he does consider exactly the issue you raise, and I really must say I am not doing it full justice here. He spends quite a bit of time discussing the properties of a mathematical point and the fact that it has zero dimension, and therefore allows one to enter into any number of dimensions. This is actually a pretty sophisticated view and is used, for example, in math and science all the time when discussing multidimensional spaces, such as in statistical mechanics or quantum mechanics.

The cloud idea is in the Yoga Sutras. This is dharma megha samadhi. I believe “megha” means “cloud”. These are in book 4, and the aphorisms pertaining to dharma megha samadhi have the most diverse translations. No commentators seem to agree what this means. Even Taimni seems to falter here. Dharma megha samadhi is the transition from nirbija samadhi to Kaivalya. It is the final transformation of yoga. The last step. Having not directly experienced this, I am in no position to know what it means. But intellectually, my guidepost is what J.J. van der Leeuw describes in *Conquest of Illusion*, in Chapter 2, where he describes flipping inside out so that the entire universe that seems external to us becomes internal to consciousness. I assume that this flipping inside out transition IS dharma megha samadhi. Anyway, yes, the “cloud” idea is there, and Taimni seems to apply it in a more general way than Patanjali does. Again, I am in no position to judge if Taimni is correct or not in doing this.

Seeing that I cut my teeth on the classic theosophy of Besant and Leadbeater, I found it helpful that Taimni drew references to this view of things. If someone has learned a different scheme for the organization of the inner planes, I can see how it would only confuse the issue. I am at least grateful for a Taimni who did know theosophy. It is the main link that let me understand Taimni.

Again, Nevi, thank you for the intelligent and constructive input.

Best,

Don

- [September 17, 2014 at 6:42 pm](#)
- [Reply](#)
- *nevi*

Perhaps it's a measure of Taimni's theosophical agenda that I failed to realise that the 'cloud' that he spoke of in the context of Asamprajnata Samadhi in his interpretation of Sutra I-17 was the cloud involved in Dharma Megha Samadhi. In translating and interpreting Sutra I-17 Taimni says, “The void of Asamprajnata Samadhi is sometimes called a ‘cloud’...”, though it doesn't incorporate the cloud metaphor into its Sanskrit name.

Taimni seems to say that the meditator passes through a sequence of these clouds until he comes to 'the' cloud of Dharma Megha Samadhi (which does incorporate the cloud metaphor in its Sanskrit name).

It's puzzling the way Taimni says that "...Samprajnata Samadhi with its characteristic Pratyaya and Asamprajnata Samadhi with its void follow each other in succession...", and I reiterate my question as to why this "void" cannot be characterised as pure consciousness (and therefore the end of the quest). You say that, in this void, "If one is inexperienced and still bound to desires and thought-forms, one cannot access the center effectively, they cannot pass directly to Kaivalya," but I can't help wondering how attachment to thought-forms and desires can exist in what is described as a void, if what we are speaking of is a void of modifications of consciousness.

I admit that the interpretation of the Sutras is even now a recondite subject, with few clear expositions, though I can't help feeling that Taimni is somewhat disingenuously bolting Theosophy onto his idea of their structure to lend the latter credence.

However, I may be entirely wrong.

- [September 18, 2014 at 8:04 am](#)
- [dondeg](#)

Hi Nevi. Thanks for the thought-provoking conversation. If you peruse my blog you will see that yours is perhaps the central question my writings are aimed at addressing. Which is to say: what does it mean to pass amongst states of consciousness? How does it happen? To this point, given both all my reading and my experiences in altered states, I have found Taimni's ideas as captured in his diagram (Figure 2 above) the most cogent. But, the bottom line is, I don't know. I am trying here to explore these issues in the best way I can. Input from people like you helps a lot to raise important questions and have a serious conversation about these matters.

As to Taimni's relationship with theosophy, I guess ultimately it was his business. I feel he put it all to good use. In my opinion, his writings do more to legitimize theosophy than any other I have read. This does not mean I buy theosophy hook, line and sinker. Like any partial truth it is, well, partial. For some things it is useful, for other things not so much. As I progress in my intellectual studies, I see more and more clearly how theosophy is just a simplified caricature of the real Hindu scriptures. Ultimately, what's the point of a middle-man if you can go to the source? So in this I can appreciate your hesitations towards theosophy. But I am sure theosophy has done a lot to introduce Western people to the teachings of Indian philosophy, and in my mind, this can only be a good thing.

Again, Nevi, thank you for the very constructive conversation. Best, Don

- [September 18, 2014 at 9:48 am](#)
- [Radhamohan mishro](#)

Many confusions are cleared now. I am thankful.

- [June 30, 2018 at 3:00 pm](#)
- [dondeg](#)

Thank you for posting.

- [July 5, 2018 at 3:02 pm](#)
- *Trinogen*

The “cloud” is your “Iness” trapped between Bliss and Abyss. Once you surrender your Iness, the Infinite Rock (the “guardian” of the Void Portal/Sunyata) allows you to get through and attain Kaivalya. I know of the Void Portal as a fact, but my fear was in high gear, so I just fell back in the human shell. You have no idea how scary that Infinite Rock really is. Be brave and dare!

Trinogen

- [October 22, 2017 at 5:02 am](#)
- [Reply](#)
- *cityyogiuk*

This thread has been super helpful for my yoga diploma paper when summarising Sabija and Nirbija. Thank you for the polite discussion and explanations. @Dondeg thank you for the schematics, I am using some of them with credit to your website unless you can tell me otherwise? Paola

- [November 25, 2018 at 6:58 am](#)
- [dondeg](#)

Dear Paola

Thank you for writing and for the kind words. I’m delighted to hear my writing was helpful to you. Yes, you can credit my web site if you quote or using any of my images. That is perfectly okay. Thank you again for writing and your interest! Best wishes, Don

- [November 25, 2018 at 9:35 pm](#)



3. *nevi*

I find other reasons to be a bit wary of Taimni’s imperious style. On page 36 he says, “The Science of Yoga cannot be mastered in one life but only in a succession of strenuous lives devoted exclusively to the Yogic ideal. And those who are impatient and cannot adopt this long term view are not yet qualified to enter this path and make steady progress towards their goal.”

Yet the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, chapter I, verses 64-66 says, “The young, the old, the extremely aged, even the sick and the infirm obtain perfection in Yoga by constant practice.”

- [September 17, 2014 at 6:17 pm](#)
- [Reply](#)
- [dondeg](#)

Well, no question this way of thinking presents a problem to people who don’t believe in reincarnation. Its hard to make a judgement call considering yoga came from a culture that does believe in reincarnation. Kinda goes with the territory. Besides, Patanjali says straight up that the results to accomplish the end goal depend on your intensity: mild, medium or large. This sounds consistent with the quote you provided. I suspect Taimni’s comment was intended for the average person who probably would require multiple lives to get the ball rolling. In general, I agree with the general point, especially for people born into Western cultures, which I consider bad karma on a spiritual level. Such people have quite a spiritual hole to climb out of just to appreciate the need to even do yoga.

Again, Nevi, thanks for the comments. Best, Don.

- [September 17, 2014 at 7:23 pm](#)
- [Reply](#)



4. *nevi*

I notice that Taimni interprets Sutra I-18 thus: “The remnant impression left in the mind on the dropping of the Pratyaya after previous practice is the other (i.e., Asamprajnata Samadhi). The nature of Asamprajnata Samadhi is defined in this Sutra.”

However, the late B. K. S. Iyengar in his “Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali” notes in his interpretation of this Sutra, “. . . here [Patanjali] has not given a precise term, but uses the expression *anyah*, meaning ‘another’, or a different type of samadhi and not asamprajnata samadhi, as conveyed by many commentators.”

I feel that perhaps primarily I’m on a search for the most accurate translation and interpretation of the Sutras, and one that is written as little as possible through a subjective lens of an approach other than that of Yoga. I feel that for Taimni, theosophy came first, and that he felt that a synthesis of theosophy and the Sutras simply had to be made.

Thank you for your very interesting and insightful commentaries.

- [September 18, 2014 at 8:20 am](#)
- [Reply](#)
- [dondeg](#)

Hi again, Nevi!

Thanks for bringing Iyengar into the conversation. I have not read this before so it is new to me. Two thoughts strike me in reply to you:

1. Please see: <http://yogasutrastudy.info/yoga-sutra-translations/ysp-sutras1-01-1-20/>

Here are given 7 translations of aphorism 1-18. Recognizing that I am by no means an expert, let alone a novice, in Sanskrit, looking at the aphorism itself, the main word that stands out to me is “samskaras”, the latent impressions that create our karma. This is what I talked about earlier about “purity”. The relative purity is how much samskara is still active. My understanding of raja yoga is that, once samadhi is learned, the next major goal is to “burn out” the samskaras; to make them like a burnt seed that cannot germinate, as one of the other aphorisms describes.

So, the aphorism is talking about a state of samadhi lacking a pratyaya but containing samskaras. My guess is that what Taimni is doing here is taking his diagram (Figure 2 above) and generalizing that any time there is passage through the center of consciousness (‘o’), this can occur with some degree of samskaras still acting as a drag or weight on the aspirant. But in all cases he seems to refer to the passage through ‘o’ as asamprajnata samadhi. Perhaps he is reading in more here than is written in the Yoga Sutras, but I cannot speak to that with any authority.

2. In reply to your comment

“I feel that perhaps primarily I’m on a search for the most accurate translation and interpretation of the Sutras...”



Yes, I understand this urge. I too have been driven by the same. But as I continue to learn, I wonder if such a thing exists. I say this because yoga is not an intellectual study, like say mathematics, but is meant to be a practice. As such, the Yoga Sutras may be more of a “guide book” than a precise exposition. Further, because of the very nature of yoga, it takes one beyond the mind and into super-mental realms of experience. Therefore, only so much can actually be described with words and language. At some point, words completely fail to describe the realities and experiences.

So, I see there is a pitfall in trying to intellectually understand the Yoga Sutras too much. One must practice, and through practice learn the real truths, truths which cannot be contained as ideas and concepts.

So, I am now less inclined to put too fine a point on some issues. Instead, my efforts have been directed towards interpreting the Yoga Sutras in such a way as to facilitate the actual practices of the eight limbs, and in particular yama and niyama. It seems to me that an at least properly oriented (as opposed to mathematically precise) intellectual understanding of the Yoga Sutras falls under “niyama” in terms of studying the scriptures. So, the efforts I make here are directed at linking mainstream Western ideas to things discussed in the Yoga Sutras.

I will close here. Again, Nevi, thank you for the constructive, stimulating, and interesting conversation. Best wishes, Don.

- [September 18, 2014 at 10:24 am](#)
- [Reply](#)



5. [drsimpson](#)

Hello!

I am doing some research into the different levels of samadhi and how they relate to Sabija vs Nirbija.

Is it that Taimni’s interpretation shows that Asamprajnata is a part of sabija? Or are you interpreting his interpretation and saying that Asamprajnata is a part of sabija?

The reason why I ask is because most interpretations show that Asamprajnata is actually the same as Nirbija. My sense is that Asamprajnata is a transitional state to Nirbija.

What seems to be the classical view according to Patanjali’s Sutras and a more modern view of Asamprajnata (if there is one of course)?

I apologize if my wording is confusing and I hope it comes across clearly. Blessings.

- [March 12, 2015 at 1:39 pm](#)
- [Reply](#)
- [dondog](#)

Dear drsimpson

Thank you for commenting and for your inquiries. Yes, I am merely repeating Taimni’s ideas and am not overlaying any of my ideas. Somewhere in *Science of Yoga* he makes the comment that some people claim that nirbija and asamprajnata samadhi are the same. But then he says: if they are the same, then why would there be two words to describe the same thing? So, he teaches very clearly that nibija samadhi is very different and distinct from asamprajnata samadhi.

According to Taimni, asamprajnata is not the transition to nirbija, as you suggest. As you can see in Figure 3 above, asamprajnata is the transition between two different levels of consciousness. Asamprajnata refers to the process whereby one lifts their consciousness to the next higher plane, for the purpose of continuing samadhi on the pratyaya at that new plane.

As I say above, to understand all this, one must understand there are 4 planes or levels of consciousness described in the yoga sutras (vitarka, vicara, ananda and asmita) and that the yogi must be able to master samadhi on all four levels.

Also as Figure 3 indicates, nirbija samadhi is an extremely special state of consciousness. It is the fulfillment of “chitta vritti nirodha”, when the mind is completely emptied of all vrittis, and samadhi can then be performed on the pure consciousness or chit (or I use the term dismatrah as well throughout my writings for pure consciousness). Success at this level gives rise to dharma mega samadhi, which is the final transition to Kaivalya, or enlightenment.

I hope this clarifies your questions. Please feel free to ask until Taimni’s scheme is clear.

Best wishes,

Don

- [March 13, 2015 at 1:36 am](#)
- [Reply](#)
- [Mangesh Gawankar](#)

Hello Don,

Firstly I wish to thank you from the bottom of my heart for writing such a beautiful blog. There are very few sources available on the internet which have explained these concepts as objectively as you have.

I had a question on similar lines. In both stages of transition (nirvitarka as well as nirvicara) the ‘seed’ ceases to exist. So do they still fall under sabeeja samadhi? Also I had read about the types of Nirbeeja Samadhi where the samadhi is disturbed due to ignorance of the yogi (Bhava Pratyaya and Upaya Pratyaya). Can you throw some light on this? I am a beginner to Indian philosophy and all my knowledge is due to secondary sources (and not on a reading of Patanjali’s Yogasutras or even Taimini) I apologize if I have written something improper.

Thanking You,  
Mangesh

- [October 10, 2015 at 2:33 pm](#)
- [dondeg](#)

Dear Mangesh

Thank you for the very kind comments. They are a great compliment and I am humbled by them. I am only perhaps a little further along on the yoga path than you since I have some experience with moving into the inner worlds of the mind, but most of my understanding is like yours, from secondary sources. I am no expert either so please take any of my comments as mere suggestions. You had two questions and I will offer comments on each.

Question 1.

About nirvitarka and nirvicara, I do not consider these to be sabija samadhi but

to be forms of asampranjnata samadhi. You said the answer in your question: since the “seed” (pratyaya) ceases to exist, then by definition, these are not sabija samadhi. Both are momentary transition states between different levels, or phases, of the gunas. Please allow me to explain to clarify.

You know that water forms vapor (gas) or liquid or solid (ice). These are the different phases of water. It is analogous for the gunas. All that we take to be physical matter are the vitarka gunas. The vicara gunas are what we perceive as our mind and thoughts. Mind and thought are the 2nd phase of the gunas. Ananda and Asmita are the 3rd and 4th phases of the gunas. We cannot directly perceive them in our physical life. They affect and influence us, but we cannot perceive them when in our physical bodies, awake in the physical world.

As ice melts to water, we can move amongst the phases of the gunas. How this is done is taught in the yoga sutras. Samadhi is a mental state we can learn that allows us to move amongst the phases. Sometimes we move amongst the phases automatically, for example, when we sleep and when we die. Yoga teaches how to voluntarily control moving through the phases of the gunas. When you move from one phase to another, you pass through a transition state that lasts only for an instant. This is what asamprajnata samadhi means. When you exit a phase of the gunas, Patanjali give it a specific name. Exiting vitarka is called nirvitarka. Exiting vicara is nirvicara. For the other two exits, Patanjali just says “and the others” and doesn’t name them.

There is no pratyaya during the momentary transition between the phases of the gunas.

I detail this in [Chapter 10 of Yogic View of Consciousness](#), which you may wish to consult.

In that Chapter I made a diagram, [Figure 2](#), which is meant to illustrate and summarize this sequence of transitions amongst the phases of the gunas.

Question 2.

You asked about the meaning of aphorisms 1.19 and 1.20 that describe Bhava Pratyaya and Upaya Pratyaya. Before writing this answer, I spent time looking into the issue and discovered this is a controversial part of the Yoga Sutras. There are many different interpretations of both aphorisms. You can see examples of various translations [at this web page](#).

I cannot claim to know the meaning of these sutras any better than the many people more expert than me who have commented on them. The main commentary I follow is that of I.K. Taimni in his book the [Science of Yoga](#). Looking at Taimni’s commentary (which starts on page 46 of the PDF file), first, he acknowledges the controversy and second, states that he will present what he takes to be a logical interpretation in the flow of the aphorisms of this section, which is intended to give a broad overview of the yogic methods. On this basis, he suggests that 1.19 describes how some people, called bhava-pratyayo, are born with yogic skills (that have come from a previous life). This means the person in this life may not understand why they have these abilities or how to use them properly. Taimni interprets 1.20 to refer to people that have followed Patanjali’s methods in this life and learned how to perform samadhi the correct way and who know how to use the skills properly, which is called upaya-pratyayo.

When you look at the other translations, some of them are similar to this interpretation, even if they are not exactly the same, but other translations are very different in meaning. The ones that are very different in meaning refer to

spirits and non-human entities (here is a [web page](#) that discusses this issue in more detail). It seems unlikely that Patanjali would talk about other spirits in the flow of the aphorisms in this section of the Yoga Sutras, so Taimni's interpretation does make sense to me.

It is a funny coincidence that you would ask me about this question right now because I am writing the final chapters of the [Yogic View of Consciousness](#) and this is the topic it focuses on: how people have discovered the other states of the gunas (which generally are called "altered states of consciousness") but how the understanding is inferior to that provided by Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras. I was not guided by aphorisms 1.19 and 1.20 while writing these chapters. But if Taimni's interpretation is correct, then I am actually writing commentary for these two aphorisms right now!

I guess it is fate that you asked me this question now so that I can consider it while I am writing the final chapters of Yogic View of Consciousness. Thank you for that!

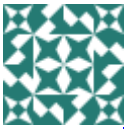
I hope these answers help you understand a little better. Please feel free to ask any questions to help clarify your understandings.

Thank you again for getting in touch, Mangesh, I appreciate it very much.

With kind regards,

Don

▪ [October 10, 2015 at 5:18 pm](#)



6. [Sairam Sridharan.](#)

Sriom.

Excellent website and author provides great help to society at large.

I wish many people take advantage of this website for many years to come so people can access them and learn different types of eight limbs and samadhi.

I pray to God that mankind can make use such beautiful websites.

Thanks for the website.

Sriom.

- [June 10, 2015 at 10:16 am](#)
- [Reply](#)
- [dondeg](#)

Dear Sir

Thank you for the most kind and gracious comments. They are deeply appreciated.

Best wishes,

Don

- [June 14, 2015 at 3:04 pm](#)
- [Reply](#)



7. [shruti somaiya](#)

awesome

- [February 23, 2016 at 3:21 pm](#)
- [Reply](#)



8. [Praveen nv](#)

It's Malayalam translation is available ? It is effective for other people's ,  
Who don't understand english

- [August 20, 2016 at 2:54 am](#)
- [Reply](#)
- [dondeg](#)

Hello Praveen

No, there is no Malayalam translation. Are you capable of translating the article?

- [August 20, 2016 at 10:11 am](#)
- [Reply](#)

9. Pingback: [Types of Samadhi By Yogananda – Happy Network Marketing](#)

10. Pingback: [What is Samadhi? – The Samadhi Movement](#)



11. [Fizniperal \(@truefizniperal\)](#)

I found this excellent article years ago, while trying to understanding Taimni and the Yogasutra.

Traditions are difficult to follow, but they tell the same story. I feel that Buddhism makes an excellent explanation of what are the stages to reach in Samma (right) Samadhi. I found strange that no one tried to openly discuss the logics behind the two methods, I think it would help a lot of meditators from different schools in their practice. Perhaps you can write something about.

In buddhist practice, the last noble path of eight (hint!) is reaching samadhi (absorption).

Actually they are a series of specific mind states called jhana. They are called first, second, third and fourth, which is actually simpler to follow than Patanjali classification. The first one is the result of mastering 5 factors: vitacca, vikara, pitti, sukha, ecaggata. Notice that most of these terms are the same in sanskrit but with different definitions. Dropping these mind factors one by one is the way to get to more refine states. The fourth one is just ecagatta (one-pointedness) with added Upekkha (equanimity).

You can also reach other four states, called arupa jhana, which the buddha learned from indian Brahminic masters called Uddaka Ramaputta and Alara Kalama. This are the samadhi based on space, consciousness, nothing, and neither-perception-nor-no perception. There is also a ninth state called nirodha, which is total cessation of perception (but even this one is not enlightenment, which is a state realized after getting the right insight on the characteristics of the world). It is also known that if you apply jhana while dying, you will be reborn in the plane of that specific jhana.

I hope my words can be useful for your studies, you can find a lot more on wiki.

I still remain curious about what the relationship is between this classification and patanjali, since the end (Kavalya) seems similar to me.

- [July 27, 2017 at 11:45 am](#)
- [Reply](#)
- [dondeg](#)

Thank you for the very nice comment. Unfortunately, I am not so expert on the Buddhist methods. It sounds like you have a nice grasp of both the Buddhist and Patanjali methods. Perhaps you can write a comparison of them that would be helpful to others. I will look into the ideas you stated as most of it is new to me. Again, thank you for contributing comments. It is very kind and helpful. Best wishes, Don

- [July 28, 2017 at 2:04 pm](#)
- [Reply](#)

12. Pingback: [Samadhi in Yoga | Yogic Way Of Life](#)



13. *Karu Nanithi*

Dear Don

May I please ask if you can assist with the following;

1. the term yoga in the light of Patanjali Yoga?
2. Yoga is practical Samkhya, "Samkhya is Theoretical yoga" Pls explain.

Thank you

Karu

- [January 4, 2018 at 4:09 am](#)
- [Reply](#)
- [dondeg](#)

Hi Karu

Thank you for posting to the blog.

1. I answer this a lot in my writings, but the short answer is: yoga is stilling the mind. What that means is very deep and I recommend you read my book Samadhi to get the quick version.

2. Samkhya is the philosophy associated with yoga. It helps explain what occurs when one practices yoga. Just like today in physics you need theory and experiment to have a complete science, for yoga you need the practices and the theory to understand the practices.

I hope this answers your questions. Happy New Year!

Don

- [January 6, 2018 at 7:21 pm](#)
- [Reply](#)



14. *Krrish*

Here's a good article by a living yogi on nine states of awareness a practitioner goes through if continues till the end <http://omswami.com/2015/02/nine-states-awareness.html>

This one on attention would also be useful. While awareness is the outcome of reaching to a state, attention relates to the level of focus/attention you put meditating  
<http://omswami.com/2014/05/nine-states-of-attention.html>

The same author also has a book (A million thought) on meditation